

Things are looking good for Wycombe

WYCOMBE Wanderers' tremendous F.A. Cup run has undoubtedly overshadowed all else at Loakes Park this season. But even so, at the half way stage, the Blues are handily placed for an assault at Hendon's Isthmian League title (writes Stuart Earp).

The season started with the introduction of the new sponsorship scheme by Rothmans with cash incentives and a most welcome accent on clean, attacking football. It seems to have worked well and disciplinary action this term has been drastically reduced.

Wanderers have benefited from the new system in many ways. Always a clean side, it is no surprise they have yet to concede a penalty point (one for a booking, four for a dismissal) while they have also netted £200 for five three-clear-goal victories over St. Albans (twice), Barking, Walthamstow and Tooting.

At the end of the season they could be in for a large slice of the sportsmanship pool if they can maintain both their playing and

disciplinary record. Whether they can catch Hendon, to my mind the favourites for the title again, remains to be seen. Dulwich and Stortford have both been seen at Loakes Park and did not appear to have the necessary ingredients for a consistent league challenge.

TALENT

Hendon, on the other hand, have a squad of players brimming with talent and when their F.A. Cup run is over — and it may not terminate at Newcastle — they will undoubtedly be difficult to beat. Perhaps the deciding game will be at Loakes Park when Wycombe will be out to avenge their 2-1 defeat at Claremont Road earlier in the year.

But despite some fine league results, Wycombe's major success this season has been in the Cup. It started with a 3-0 win at Tilbury,

perhaps the best performance so far, and came to an end at the hands of Peterborough United, the Fourth Division leaders. In games against Tilbury, Woking, Chatham and Worthing, not one goal was conceded and when they did let one in, it proved too late for professionals Newport on that memorable day at Loakes Park.

The game, watched by a crowd of some 7,000, was a worthy triumph for Wycombe who threw aside all their injury problems and convincingly beat the men from Monmouthshire. It was a personal triumph too for Steve Perrin, who scored two goals. Manager Brian Lee felt this player had improved no end as the season progressed. He also singled out veteran Tony Horseman for praise: "If he goes on knocking in goals, he could go on forever," said Lee.

As with many clubs, injuries can mean the difference between success and failure, but Wanderers' strength in depth has served them well in this sphere. First casualty was Derek Gamblin, who broke his knee cap. Then Ian Rundle went down with meningitis and centre forward Keith Searle ripped ligaments in his knee, necessitating an operation.

Searle and Gamblin should both be back in February but the footballing career of Rundle is still undecided. Most sorely missed was Searle, who capped a fine season with his first England appearance, scoring the winning goal against West Germany at Wembley. I wonder what the Peterborough result would have looked like with a full strength side on the field.

There has also been the national

problem of the floodlighting ban, restricting both matches and training.

Brian Lee feels there will be more comings and goings in the new year at Wycombe. But provided the bulk of the squad stay together, the second half of the season promises much for the Blues. The Amateur Cup is coming up, the final year for this competition, and the league position is promising.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B St'tford	29	16	8	5	57	19	56
Dulwich	30	15	11	4	49	24	56
Hendon	22	15	5	2	38	9	50
Wycombe	21	14	4	3	50	21	46
Leatherh'd	23	14	3	6	50	22	45
L'tonstone	24	12	6	6	36	21	42
Hayes	23	12	5	6	45	25	41
Oxford C	29	10	12	7	31	34	41
Tooting	30	11	6	13	40	45	39
Ilford	27	10	7	10	32	34	37
Kingst'ian	25	8	9	8	32	28	33
Walton	19	9	5	5	32	23	32
Hitchin	22	9	5	8	43	35	32
Enfield	22	9	4	9	28	24	31
Sutton	25	7	10	8	32	35	31
W'matow	27	8	7	12	32	43	31
Barking	27	8	6	13	34	46	30
Woking	17	9	1	7	29	29	28
Bromley	27	6	6	15	30	40	24
Clapton	27	3	2	22	15	94	11
St. Albans	27	2	4	21	21	66	10
Casuals	23	2	2	19	16	51	8